

Assembly Bill No. 1572

CHAPTER 547

An act to amend Section 1363.03 of the Civil Code, to amend Sections 354.5, 13107.3, 13307, and 14225 of the Elections Code, and to amend Section 22970.20 of the Water Code, relating to voting.

[Approved by Governor October 11, 2009. Filed with
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LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1572, Committee on Elections and Redistricting. Voting.

(1) Under existing law, a candidate may have a ballot designation appear on the ballot immediately under his or her name, as prescribed. If the candidate chooses a ballot designation, he or she must submit to the county elections official a ballot designation worksheet with his or her declaration of candidacy.

This bill would make nonsubstantive changes to these provisions.

(2) Existing law permits a candidate for local nonpartisan elective office to prepare a candidate's statement. The elections official is required to send to the voters, together with the sample ballot, a voter's pamphlet which contains the written statement of each candidate that is prepared pursuant to these provisions. The local agency may estimate the total cost of producing and processing the candidate's statement, and may require each candidate filing a statement to pay in advance to the local agency his or her pro rata share of that estimate. Existing law states that the elections official is not bound by that estimate and may, on a pro rata basis, bill the candidate for additional actual expense or refund any excess paid depending on the final actual cost. In the event of an underpayment, the elections official may require the candidate to pay the balance of the cost incurred, and in the event of an overpayment, the elections official shall prorate the excess amount among the candidates and refund the excess amount paid within 30 days of the election.

The bill would instead shift the authority to bill the candidate for additional actual expenses and the obligation to refund any overpayment to the candidate from the elections official to the local agency that produced the estimated cost.

The bill also would delete an obsolete provision relating to the filing of a candidate's statement by a candidate for judicial office.

(3) Existing law provides procedures pertaining to "absentee ballots."

The bill would change statutory references to "absentee ballots" to references to "vote by mail ballots."

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 1363.03 of the Civil Code is amended to read:

1363.03. (a) An association shall adopt rules, in accordance with the procedures prescribed by Article 4 (commencing with Section 1357.100) of Chapter 2, that do all of the following:

(1) Ensure that if any candidate or member advocating a point of view is provided access to association media, newsletters, or Internet Web sites during a campaign, for purposes that are reasonably related to that election, equal access shall be provided to all candidates and members advocating a point of view, including those not endorsed by the board, for purposes that are reasonably related to the election. The association shall not edit or redact any content from these communications, but may include a statement specifying that the candidate or member, and not the association, is responsible for that content.

(2) Ensure access to the common area meeting space, if any exists, during a campaign, at no cost, to all candidates, including those who are not incumbents, and to all members advocating a point of view, including those not endorsed by the board, for purposes reasonably related to the election.

(3) Specify the qualifications for candidates for the board of directors and any other elected position, and procedures for the nomination of candidates, consistent with the governing documents. A nomination or election procedure shall not be deemed reasonable if it disallows any member of the association from nominating himself or herself for election to the board of directors.

(4) Specify the qualifications for voting, the voting power of each membership, the authenticity, validity, and effect of proxies, and the voting period for elections, including the times at which polls will open and close, consistent with the governing documents.

(5) Specify a method of selecting one or three independent third parties as inspector, or inspectors, of election utilizing one of the following methods:

(A) Appointment of the inspector or inspectors by the board.

(B) Election of the inspector or inspectors by the members of the association.

(C) Any other method for selecting the inspector or inspectors.

(6) Allow the inspector, or inspectors, to appoint and oversee additional persons to verify signatures and to count and tabulate votes as the inspector or inspectors deem appropriate, provided that the persons are independent third parties.

(b) Notwithstanding any other law or provision of the governing documents, elections regarding assessments legally requiring a vote, election and removal of members of the association board of directors, amendments to the governing documents, or the grant of exclusive use of common area property pursuant to Section 1363.07 shall be held by secret ballot in accordance with the procedures set forth in this section. A quorum shall be required only if so stated in the governing documents of the association or other provisions of law. If a quorum is required by the governing documents,

each ballot received by the inspector of elections shall be treated as a member present at a meeting for purposes of establishing a quorum. An association shall allow for cumulative voting using the secret ballot procedures provided in this section, if cumulative voting is provided for in the governing documents.

(c) (1) The association shall select an independent third party or parties as an inspector of election. The number of inspectors of election shall be one or three.

(2) For the purposes of this section, an independent third party includes, but is not limited to, a volunteer poll worker with the county registrar of voters, a licensee of the California Board of Accountancy, or a notary public. An independent third party may be a member of the association, but may not be a member of the board of directors or a candidate for the board of directors or related to a member of the board of directors or a candidate for the board of directors. An independent third party may not be a person, business entity, or subdivision of a business entity who is currently employed or under contract to the association for any compensable services unless expressly authorized by rules of the association adopted pursuant to paragraph (5) of subdivision (a).

(3) The inspector or inspectors of election shall do all of the following:

(A) Determine the number of memberships entitled to vote and the voting power of each.

(B) Determine the authenticity, validity, and effect of proxies, if any.

(C) Receive ballots.

(D) Hear and determine all challenges and questions in any way arising out of or in connection with the right to vote.

(E) Count and tabulate all votes.

(F) Determine when the polls shall close, consistent with the governing documents.

(G) Determine the tabulated results of the election.

(H) Perform any acts as may be proper to conduct the election with fairness to all members in accordance with this section, the Corporations Code, and all applicable rules of the association regarding the conduct of the election that are not in conflict with this section.

(4) An inspector of election shall perform his or her duties impartially, in good faith, to the best of his or her ability, and as expeditiously as is practical. If there are three inspectors of election, the decision or act of a majority shall be effective in all respects as the decision or act of all. Any report made by the inspector or inspectors of election is prima facie evidence of the facts stated in the report.

(d) (1) For purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

(A) “Proxy” means a written authorization signed by a member or the authorized representative of the member that gives another member or members the power to vote on behalf of that member.

(B) “Signed” means the placing of the member’s name on the proxy (whether by manual signature, typewriting, telegraphic transmission, or otherwise) by the member or authorized representative of the member.

(2) Proxies shall not be construed or used in lieu of a ballot. An association may use proxies if permitted or required by the bylaws of the association and if those proxies meet the requirements of this article, other laws, and the association's governing documents, but the association shall not be required to prepare or distribute proxies pursuant to this section.

(3) Any instruction given in a proxy issued for an election that directs the manner in which the proxyholder is to cast the vote shall be set forth on a separate page of the proxy that can be detached and given to the proxyholder to retain. The proxyholder shall cast the member's vote by secret ballot. The proxy may be revoked by the member prior to the receipt of the ballot by the inspector of elections as described in Section 7613 of the Corporations Code.

(e) Ballots and two preaddressed envelopes with instructions on how to return ballots shall be mailed by first-class mail or delivered by the association to every member not less than 30 days prior to the deadline for voting. In order to preserve confidentiality, a voter may not be identified by name, address, or lot, parcel, or unit number on the ballot. The association shall use as a model those procedures used by California counties for ensuring confidentiality of vote by mail ballots, including all of the following:

(1) The ballot itself is not signed by the voter, but is inserted into an envelope that is sealed. This envelope is inserted into a second envelope that is sealed. In the upper left-hand corner of the second envelope, the voter shall sign his or her name, indicate his or her name, and indicate the address or separate interest identifier that entitles him or her to vote.

(2) The second envelope is addressed to the inspector or inspectors of election, who will be tallying the votes. The envelope may be mailed or delivered by hand to a location specified by the inspector or inspectors of election. The member may request a receipt for delivery.

(f) All votes shall be counted and tabulated by the inspector or inspectors of election or his or her designee in public at a properly noticed open meeting of the board of directors or members. Any candidate or other member of the association may witness the counting and tabulation of the votes. No person, including a member of the association or an employee of the management company, shall open or otherwise review any ballot prior to the time and place at which the ballots are counted and tabulated. The inspector of election, or his or her designee, may verify the member's information and signature on the outer envelope prior to the meeting at which ballots are tabulated. Once a secret ballot is received by the inspector of elections, it shall be irrevocable.

(g) The tabulated results of the election shall be promptly reported to the board of directors of the association and shall be recorded in the minutes of the next meeting of the board of directors and shall be available for review by members of the association. Within 15 days of the election, the board shall publicize the tabulated results of the election in a communication directed to all members.

(h) The sealed ballots at all times shall be in the custody of the inspector or inspectors of election or at a location designated by the inspector or inspectors until after the tabulation of the vote, and until the time allowed by Section 7527 of the Corporations Code for challenging the election has expired, at which time custody shall be transferred to the association. If there is a recount or other challenge to the election process, the inspector or inspectors of election shall, upon written request, make the ballots available for inspection and review by an association member or his or her authorized representative. Any recount shall be conducted in a manner that preserves the confidentiality of the vote.

(i) After the transfer of the ballots to the association, the ballots shall be stored by the association in a secure place for no less than one year after the date of the election.

(j) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the rules adopted pursuant to this section may provide for the nomination of candidates from the floor of membership meetings or nomination by any other manner. Those rules may permit write-in candidates for ballots.

(k) Except for the meeting to count the votes required in subdivision (f), an election may be conducted entirely by mail unless otherwise specified in the governing documents.

(l) The provisions of this section apply to both incorporated and unincorporated associations, notwithstanding any contrary provision of the governing documents.

(m) The procedures set forth in this section shall apply to votes cast directly by the membership, but do not apply to votes cast by delegates or other elected representatives.

(n) In the event of a conflict between this section and the provisions of the Nonprofit Mutual Benefit Corporation Law (Part 3 (commencing with Section 7110) of Division 2 of Title 1 of the Corporations Code) relating to elections, the provisions of this section shall prevail.

(o) The amendments made to this section by the act adding this subdivision shall become operative on July 1, 2006.

SEC. 2. Section 354.5 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

354.5. (a) "Signature" includes either of the following:

(1) A person's mark if the name of the person affixing the mark is written near the mark by a witness over the age of 18 years designated by the person and the designee subscribes his or her own name as a witness thereto. For purposes of this paragraph, a signature stamp may be used as a mark, provided that the authorized user complies with the provisions of this paragraph.

(2) An impression made by the use of a signature stamp pursuant to the requirements specified in subdivision (c).

(b) A mark attested as provided in paragraph (1) of subdivision (a), or an impression made by a signature stamp as provided in paragraph (2) of subdivision (a), may serve as a signature for any purpose specified in this code, including a sworn statement.

(c) An authorized user of a signature stamp may use it to affix a signature to a document or writing any time that a signature is required by this code, provided that all of the following conditions, as applicable, are met:

(1) A signature stamp used to obtain a ballot or vote by mail ballot in any local, state, or federal election shall be used only by the authorized user of that signature stamp.

(2) A signature stamp shall be affixed by the authorized user in the presence of the Secretary of State, his or her designee, the local elections official, or his or her designee, to obtain a ballot, in any local, state, or federal election unless the authorized user of the signature stamp votes by vote by mail ballot. If the owner of a signature stamp votes by vote by mail ballot, he or she shall affix the signature stamp on the identification envelope in accordance with the requirements of Section 3019.

(d) A signature affixed with a signature stamp by an authorized user in accordance with the requirements of this section shall be treated in the same manner as a signature made in writing.

(e) A registered voter or any person who is eligible to vote, who qualifies as an authorized user pursuant to paragraph (1) of subdivision (g), may use a signature stamp only after he or she first submits his or her affidavit of registration or a new affidavit of registration, whichever is applicable, in the presence of a county elections official, using the signature stamp to sign the affidavit.

(f) The Secretary of State shall report to the Legislature not later than January 1, 2009, regarding the use of signature stamps during the 2008 elections.

(g) The following definitions apply for purposes of this section:

(1) “Authorized user” means either of the following:

(A) A person with a disability who, by reason of that disability, is unable to write and who owns a signature stamp.

(B) A person using the signature stamp on behalf of the owner of the stamp with the owner’s express consent and in the presence of the owner.

(2) “Disability” means a medical condition, mental disability, or physical disability, as those terms are defined in subdivisions (h), (i), and (k) of Section 12926 of the Government Code.

(3) “Signature stamp” means a stamp that contains the impression of any of the following:

(A) The actual signature of a person with a disability.

(B) A mark or symbol that is adopted by the person with the disability.

(C) A signature of the name of a person with a disability that is made by another person and is adopted by the person with the disability.

SEC. 3. Section 13107.3 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

13107.3. (a) A candidate who submits a ballot designation pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 13107 shall file a ballot designation worksheet that supports the use of that ballot designation by the candidate, in a format prescribed by the Secretary of State.

(b) The ballot designation worksheet shall be filed with the elections official at the same time that the candidate files his or her declaration of candidacy.

(c) In the event that a candidate fails to file a ballot designation worksheet in accordance with subdivision (a), no designation shall appear under the candidate's name on the ballot.

SEC. 4. Section 13307 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

13307. (a) (1) Each candidate for nonpartisan elective office in any local agency, including any city, county, city and county, or district, may prepare a candidate's statement on an appropriate form provided by the elections official. The statement may include the name, age, and occupation of the candidate and a brief description, of no more than 200 words, of the candidate's education and qualifications expressed by the candidate himself or herself. However, the governing body of the local agency may authorize an increase in the limitations on words for the statement from 200 to 400 words. The statement shall not include the party affiliation of the candidate, nor membership or activity in partisan political organizations.

(2) The statement authorized by this subdivision shall be filed in the office of the elections official when the candidate's nomination papers are returned for filing, if it is for a primary election, or for an election for offices for which there is no primary. The statement shall be filed in the office of the elections official no later than the 88th day before the election, if it is for an election for which nomination papers are not required to be filed. If a runoff election or general election occurs within 88 days of the primary or first election, the statement shall be filed with the elections official by the third day following the governing body's declaration of the results from the primary or first election.

(3) Except as provided in Section 13309, the statement may be withdrawn, but not changed, during the period for filing nomination papers and until 5 p.m. of the next working day after the close of the nomination period.

(b) The elections official shall send to each voter, together with the sample ballot, a voter's pamphlet which contains the written statements of each candidate that is prepared pursuant to this section. The statement of each candidate shall be printed in type of uniform size and darkness, and with uniform spacing. The elections official shall provide a Spanish translation to those candidates who wish to have one, and shall select a person to provide that translation from the list of approved Spanish language translators and interpreters of the superior court of the county or from an institution accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

(c) The local agency may estimate the total cost of printing, handling, translating, and mailing the candidate's statements filed pursuant to this section, including costs incurred as a result of complying with the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended. The local agency may require each candidate filing a statement to pay in advance to the local agency his or her estimated pro rata share as a condition of having his or her statement included in the voter's pamphlet. In the event the estimated payment is required, the receipt for the payment shall include a written notice that the estimate is

just an approximation of the actual cost that varies from one election to another election and may be significantly more or less than the estimate, depending on the actual number of candidates filing statements. Accordingly, the local agency is not bound by the estimate and may, on a pro rata basis, bill the candidate for additional actual expense or refund any excess paid depending on the final actual cost. In the event of underpayment, the local agency may require the candidate to pay the balance of the cost incurred. In the event of overpayment, the local agency which or the elections official who collected the estimated cost shall prorate the excess amount among the candidates and refund the excess amount paid within 30 days of the election.

(d) Nothing in this section shall be deemed to make any statement or the authors thereof free or exempt from any civil or criminal action or penalty because of any false, slanderous, or libelous statements offered for printing or contained in the voter's pamphlet.

(e) Before the nominating period opens, the local agency for that election shall determine whether a charge shall be levied against that candidate for the candidate's statement sent to each voter. This decision shall not be revoked or modified after the seventh day prior to the opening of the nominating period. A written statement of the regulations with respect to charges for handling, packaging, and mailing shall be provided to each candidate or his or her representative at the time he or she picks up the nomination papers.

(f) For purposes of this section and Section 13310, the board of supervisors shall be deemed the governing body of judicial elections.

SEC. 5. Section 14225 of the Elections Code is amended to read:

14225. Members of the precinct board shall not deposit in the ballot container any ballot from which the slip containing the number of the ballot has not been removed by a member of the precinct board and handed to the voter. This section does not apply to a vote by mail ballot.

SEC. 6. Section 22970.20 of the Water Code is amended to read:

22970.20. Not less than seven days before any runoff election, any voter entitled to vote by vote by mail ballot as provided in Section 10530 of the Elections Code may file with the county elections official, either in person or by mail, his or her written application for a vote by mail ballot. Vote by mail voting shall be conducted in accordance with the provisions of Section 10530 of the Elections Code.